 November 28, 1972

ANALYTICAL SUMMARY - NSSM 160
Policy toward Morocco

Following the second coup attempt in a little over one year against King Hassan of Morocco, NSSM 160 was issued asking for a study of US policy toward Morocco and an evaluation of our interests there. The study prepared [next tab -- "NSSM 160 Study"] was to identify US interests as precisely as possible, evaluate their relative importance, and delineate alternative approaches that we might take to serve those interests. Attached to the NSSM 160 options paper [small tab marked "SNIE"] are a Special NIE, "Prospects for the Moroccan Monarchy," as well as a detailed fact sheet on Morocco and contingency papers on the Kenitra communications complex and the Voice of America relay station at Tangier.

The operational situation with which we are dealing is this: Foreign Minister Benhima told Secretary Rogers at the UN that the King would like to review the US military presence in Morocco at an early opportunity. Since then, the general outline of Moroccan thinking has emerged as follows:


--They would like the US to consolidate its facilities from three to two. This means closing the Kenitra training base (of little intrinsic importance to us, but of high visibility), but continuing at Sidi Yahia and Bouknadel, two important elements in the US naval communications network in the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic.

--Morocco would like a higher "rent" payment for the remaining facilities. Our current aid effort is not formally linked to the use of the three facilities, and the Moroccans would like to establish this link, citing our arrangements with Spain as a model.

--Finally, Morocco wants more control of the US facilities. Some Moroccans still have lingering doubts over the US role in the most recent assassination attempt against the King.

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DECLAS - Impossible to determine date.
BY AUTH - Henry A. Kissinger (classification of NSSM 160)



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This analytical summary will be organized around the assessment of the situation contained in the options paper and the SNIE; the evaluation of US interests; and the policy options proposed.

Current Situation in Morocco and Outlook for the Future

--The August 16 coup and assassination attempt against Hassan has left the Moroccan military divided and badly shaken. Hassan has taken direct control of the armed forces, has withdrawn their ammunition, has publicly berated them, and has relieved senior officers of their commands. Morale and loyalty are both low, and another coup attempt from within the armed forces could come at any time.

--The King's reaction to the most recent attempt on his life has been to blame everyone but himself. He shows no signs of preparing to change his style of rule, nor does he devote much time or energy to the business of governing. Unlike Jordan's King Hussein and the Shah of Iran, King Hassan does not sense the need to bring about reforms as a way of bolstering the monarchy. He does not readily take advice, and shows no signs of changing his ostentatious personal life-style.

--The King is unlikely to make a real opening to the opposition that would allow it to share power and responsibility with him. After going through the motions of consulting with opposition parties with a view toward broadening the base of the regime, the King has named his brother-in-law as Prime Minister, who in turn has formed a government of unimpressive technicians and totally lacking in opposition members. Elections are promised for next spring, but for the moment the political atmosphere in the country is rather bleak.

--The French and Algerians, as influential third parties, continue to support Hassan, but are hedging their bets in case he falls by keeping in touch with possible successor leaders. The Libyans remain actively hostile to Hassan, but with little capability to act. The real danger to Hassan is internal, not external.

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--As a means of staying in power by striking a nationalist pose, the King may try to move against the large foreign presence in Morocco, although the urgency of his doing so is less now that his attempt at reconciliation with the opposition has failed. US facilities at the Kenitra complex would be particularly vulnerable. Already the King has said that the American presence should be the subject of new talks with the US. Any successor government would be even more likely to move against the US presence.

--Despite the apparent odds against him, Hassan still has some assets that may help him stay in power. The countryside appears to remain passively loyal; the Gendarmerie seems to be a reliable instrument for maintaining internal order; the opposition political parties are divided and not particularly effective; this year the economy has performed reasonably well, although long-term social and economic problems remain; new governors have been appointed in the countryside and may help improve administration there; finally, the King, on occasion, shows himself to be a skillful political manipulator, and has been able to eliminate many of his powerful opponents following two unsuccessful coup attempts.

--This evaluation adds up to a rather pessimistic assessment for Morocco. Another coup attempt seems likely in the near future, and the odds are that eventually one will succeed. The character of any new government after a successful coup is difficult to predict. A successor government is perhaps more likely to be conservative or moderately nationalist than revolutionary, but in any case it would seek to reorder its relations with influential outsiders like France and the US.

US Interests in Morocco

The options paper concludes that US interests in Morocco are important, but not vital to US security or to global and regional policy objectives. In particular, US interests, in order of priority, are:

--General Political/Diplomatic. It is in the US interest to have friendly relations with the Moroccan government as a means of furthering US objectives in the Mediterranean, Africa and the Arab world. A hostile government in Morocco could pose problems for naval access through the Strait of Gibraltar in times of crisis, and an increased Soviet presence in the country would be of concern to NATO and the Sixth Fleet. A friendly government is likely to continue to allow the US to use the VOA transmitter in Tangier, and

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to protect more substantial US security interests described below as well. [Comment: As imprecisely defined as it is, this interest in cordial political/diplomatic relations probably deserves its place at the top of the list. The problem is that it is not clear whether King Hassan's regime serves this interest any better than a possible successor.]

--National Security. The United States has an informal agreement with Morocco dating from 1963, whereby we provide training for the Moroccan air force on a base at Kenitra (a "Moroccanized" facility), while retaining full control over two naval communications stations at Sidi Yahia and Bouknadel. Kenitra is large and visible, but not very important to US interests, while the smaller facilities provide an essential link in the naval communications network in the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic. Because of the presence of the facilities in Morocco, the US has use of 293 Moroccan registered frequencies. Their loss would "significantly degrade" the Navy's communication capabilities in the area. DOD is planning to complete a Fleet Satellite Communications System by early FY 1977, but until that time they view the retention of Sidi Yahia and Bouknadel, but not Kenitra, as highly important.

[Comment: The DOD view tends to downplay several aspects of the communications facilities and the Moroccan frequencies. First, much of the normal naval communications load is not absolutely essential. In an emergency or crisis, the Navy, without Moroccan facilities, could communicate with the Sixth Fleet, provided that it limited its messages to those of priority importance. In a crisis, the US would also probably feel free to use Moroccan-registered frequencies, even if formal permission was lacking. Second, the Fleet Satellite system could go into effect somewhat earlier than FY 1977 if this became an urgent issue. Planning for FY 1977 assumes normal procedures and funding. Third, DOD is reluctant to admit that the Moroccan facilities can be phased out gradually and relocated elsewhere, such as in Spain. Their own contingency paper, however, indicates that in an emergency they could move to Rota, Spain, in a little over three months at a cost of well under \$10 million.]

--Economic-Commercial. American direct private investment in Morocco amounts to about \$50 million (in contrast to French invest-

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ments of nearly \$3 billion). US exports to Morocco have totalled about \$100 million annually in recent years, while imports have been under \$10 million.


--Development. The United States has been closely involved with Morocco's development efforts through AID programs and the Peace Corps. As part of a broader interest in Morocco's stability and friendly ties to the US, we have tried to promote economic growth and some social development. Morocco's long-term prospects are closely related to progress in these areas. The US has an interest in being associated with programs that add to the well-being of ordinary Moroccans, not just to that of the monarchy.

Policy Options

The key question for the US in Morocco is how best to protect its interests: by continuing current policy or even increasing support for the monarchy; or by disengaging, at least selectively. The King himself may move against US interests if it suits his political needs, or he may be replaced soon by a government that would ask the US to cut back on its presence.

A basic judgment is needed to inform policy choices at this point: Should the US protect against the impact of abrupt loss of its interests in Morocco by hedging its bets and, in the case of the communications facilities, transferring some functions to other locations; or are our interests of such importance and so difficult to assure without a friendly regime in Morocco that we should continue, or perhaps increase, our support for Hassan. In the former case, the risk is that our moves toward disengagement may weaken Hassan and lead him to retaliate; in the latter case, however, the problem is that if Hassan disappears, we have no strong fallback position to protect both tangible security interests and less tangible political ones.

The key issues in formulating policy toward Morocco are the US posture toward the King; the US military presence at the Kenitra complex; levels of US aid; contacts with opposition groups; and the VOA presence at Tangiers.



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The paper suggests four broad alternatives:

--Continue Current Policy. No changes would be made in US official or civilian presence in Morocco and US economic and military programs would continue at their present levels. Close contacts would be retained with the Palace, and occasional displays of special favors for Hassan would continue. Minimal contacts with the Opposition would go on. This option assumes that Hassan has a good chance to survive; is the best guarantor of US interests; and that any change from the status quo now would be misread by the King and his enemies. On the other hand, this policy would keep the US closely committed to Hassan, which could hurt relations with his successors; it does nothing to provide a fallback position in case the communications facilities are lost; and it ignores the volatile situation in Morocco. [Comment: Moroccan Foreign Minister Benhima has already indicated that some changes in the US military presence will be needed, or at least a larger quid pro quo will be demanded if the present arrangements are to be maintained.]

--Expand US programs in Morocco to Shore Up the King. US resources, in larger quantities, would go to Morocco to strengthen the Monarchy insofar as outside help can do so: Economic and social reforms would be pressed; displays of friendship for the King would increase. In short, the US would try to seduce Hassan into doing what is needed to protect his throne. [Comment: This is pretty much a throw-away option. Very few in the bureaucracy favor it; it probably would not work; and it ignores the squeeze on US resources for aid. In addition, it does nothing to alleviate the basic problem in Morocco -- the lack of effective leadership. If the Nixon Doctrine is to be taken seriously, we cannot be expected to help Monarchs who are unwilling or unable to help themselves.]

--Disengagement. The US would begin a phased reduction in official US programs and presence in Morocco. We would plan to withdraw from the communications facilities by the end of FY 1975. The Peace Corps and AID would be cut back from their currently high levels. VOA Tangier would be partly "Moroccanized" to decrease its visibility as a US institution. Since the US already has the largest

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presence in Morocco of any foreign country, some cutbacks seem feasible and desirable. The King may even profit by being less vulnerable to the charge of being too close to the US. The danger, however, is that this policy could unravel rapidly. The King might retaliate if he felt we were deserting him. This policy also would force the Navy to accept some degradation of its communications. [Comment: The problem with this option is not so much its underlying assumptions as the implied rigidity of cutting all programs across the board. It may make sense to cut some of the politically sensitive military presence at Kenitra, while maintaining or even expanding non-official programs as a hedge against a change in regimes.]

--Selective Disengagement. This policy would begin by reducing the most prominent and politically sensitive aspects of the US presence in Morocco. The communications facilities would be phased out in stages, with full withdrawal completed in FY 1977. The US would treat the King with usual courtesy, but would also open new contacts with opposition groups. This policy would seek to protect essential interests, without a massive expenditure of resources or heavy involvement in Moroccan politics. [Comment: Recent Moroccan statements suggest that selective disengagement may be forced on us whether we want it or not. Again the question need not be one simply of disengagement or involvement, but rather the mix and the issues on which we concentrate efforts and resources. If the Moroccans ask us to leave Kenitra, this need not necessarily lead to a cutback in all other US programs. There are likely to be some official programs and many private sector relationships that will be welcome under virtually any regime and that would make a useful contribution to the overall US-Moroccan relationship.]

The Immediate Issue

Foreign Minister Benhima has asked for a review of the US military presence in Morocco. He has hinted that perhaps the three facilities we now have could be consolidated, thereby lowering the US profile. The choice for the US seems to be whether to seize the opportunity offered by the Moroccans to disengage gradually at their initiative, allowing an orderly transfer of the communications facilities to other locations, or whether to pay a higher price to retain the current arrangements.

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The options paper stops short of spelling out the concrete choices as they now present themselves. Three specific decisions that could usefully emerge from this policy review are:

--A directive to Defense to plan to close down the Kenitra Training base in response to Moroccan requests. All communications functions would be consolidated at the remaining two facilities and would be operated with a low visibility US presence. Until alternative communications networks are available, we will try to hold onto these facilities.

--Ask Defense to examine the possibility of bringing the Fleet Satellite System into operation before FY 1977. If this is primarily a budgetary or bureaucratic problem rather than a technical one, a high-level directive should be able to speed up the acquisition of this alternative communications channel.

--Ask State to prepare an aid package for Morocco that will conform to the situation following the closure of the US Naval Training Command at the Kenitra base. In return for allowing us to continue at the other two facilities, the Moroccans will expect at least as much aid as in the past. To reach this level, we may need to come up with some new programs, perhaps concentrating more heavily on the development side where the regime is particularly weak.

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